REPORT OF FACT FINDING REVIEW
Massachusetts Department of Education

Elihu Greenwood Elementary School
Boston Public Schools

Executive Summary

The Fact-Finding Team convened by the Department of Education was responsible for reviewing documents, interviewing stakeholders and visiting classrooms in order to identify the causes or reasons for poor student performance at the Elihu Greenwood Elementary School and assessing the school's prospects for improvement. The team focused on four domains (Curriculum and Instruction, School Climate, Organizational Structures and Management and Leadership and Planning) to determine areas of strength or weakness. There are a number of sources of optimism; however, curriculum and instruction are still areas where concerted efforts are needed to ensure high student performance. The teams' key findings in each domain include the following:

I Curriculum and Instruction

The Fact Finding Team visited 27 classrooms during the three day visit (April 5-8, 2004) and identified two key areas that defined the school's progress toward student improvement: school-wide buy in and implementation of the district mandated curriculum/programs was noted as a strength and the quality of instructional methods and practices a weakness.

Implementation of district mandated curriculum/programs:

- In the past three years the E. Greenwood staff has adapted to and implemented three major programs—Reader's Workshop, Writers' Workshop and TERC Investigations.
- Additional programs implemented include: Responsive Classroom, and one-on-one student conferencing.
- The Principal has conducted in-house professional development in the areas of literacy and math to support teachers' implementation of new programs.
- There is clear evidence that the structural elements (mini-lessons, student conferencing, reading, writing and math notebooks, AYP math, 10 minute math, etc.) are in place.
- The structure and philosophy of Readers'/Writers' Workshop and TERC Investigations supports the instructional priorities the school listed in its 2003-2004 Whole School Improvement Plan (WSIP).
- The principal has maximized coaches' time to focus on supporting teachers' implementation and conversations about new programs.
- Disaggregated analysis of the most recent SAT 9, MCAS and district formative assessments have led to professional development targeting weaknesses identified and teacher created literacy, vocabulary and math units to supplement district programs.

Quality of instructional methods and practices:

- Teachers, coaches, and principal recognize the variability in the quality of instructional methods and practices attributed to teachers' limited knowledge of pedagogy attached to new programs and a lack of depth in their own understanding of some aspects of reading and writing process and mathematics instructional strategies.
- Key stakeholders (teachers, coaches and principal) understand that introducing critical thinking skills, higher order skills, and achieving depth with content are the next elements that will enhance the rigor of the school's programs.
- Positive instructional practices were uneven throughout the school, these include: maximizing student engagement, emphasizing vocabulary, strong routines, and effective transitions. The school needs to ensure these practices and other positive ones are common throughout the school.
- Some key weaknesses observed were: variability of rigor, degrees of teachers' risk taking to move instruction to a higher level even when students were primed to do so, teacher's getting stalled on a lesson element and failing to move the lesson along, and inconsistent on-going assessment as the lesson evolved.
- Teachers are struggling with the pedagogical shift from teacher dominated (centered) instruction to serving as facilitators of learning activities that enhance student skills at becoming self-reliant learners.
- Peer observations has been limited by problems due to contractual issues and to a degree of professional reluctance, yet holds great potential in exposing all teachers to the exemplary instructional practices taking place in some classrooms.
- The school has been slow in identifying instructional practices that will extend students thinking beyond literal text interpretations to extract deeper meaning and generate inferences.

II School Climate

The Fact-Finding Team encountered a school climate that is characterized by positive relationships and respect. In addition the vision and commitment of the principal and staff is evident through staff collaboration and the family atmosphere obvious at the school.

Collaboration among staff:

- supports the vision for student improvement as expressed in the Whole School Improvement Plan (WSIP).
- A collegial atmosphere permeates the building.
- Teachers schedules allow for common planning time to meet by grade level teams and content area teams—math.
- The inclusive philosophy of the Special Education department has allowed for the least restrictive educational setting of numerous Special Needs students.

Interactions:

- The staff respects the principals' instructional leadership, broad-based knowledge professional development contributions, visibility and valuable feedback she provides about their work.

- Student and teacher interactions observed in classrooms were respectful and in part a reflection of "Responsive Classroom" routines practiced school wide.

III Organizational Structures and Management

Several factors within the domain of organizational structures and management are influential in describing the operations at Elihu Greenwood School. Structures that afford opportunities for teacher collaboration include:

- In-house professional development offered to teachers for college credits in the areas of Literacy, math and special education.
- The Collaborative Coaching and Learning (CCL) model, where teachers participate in 6-8 weeks cycles of professional reading and discourse, peer observations, and modeling of lessons and best practices.
- In addition to common planning time where teachers meet by grade level, one-on-one meetings with the principal and weekly staff/administrative meetings, selected teachers meet as the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) and the Math Leadership Team (MLT) two groups that have made influential and key instructional decisions at the school.

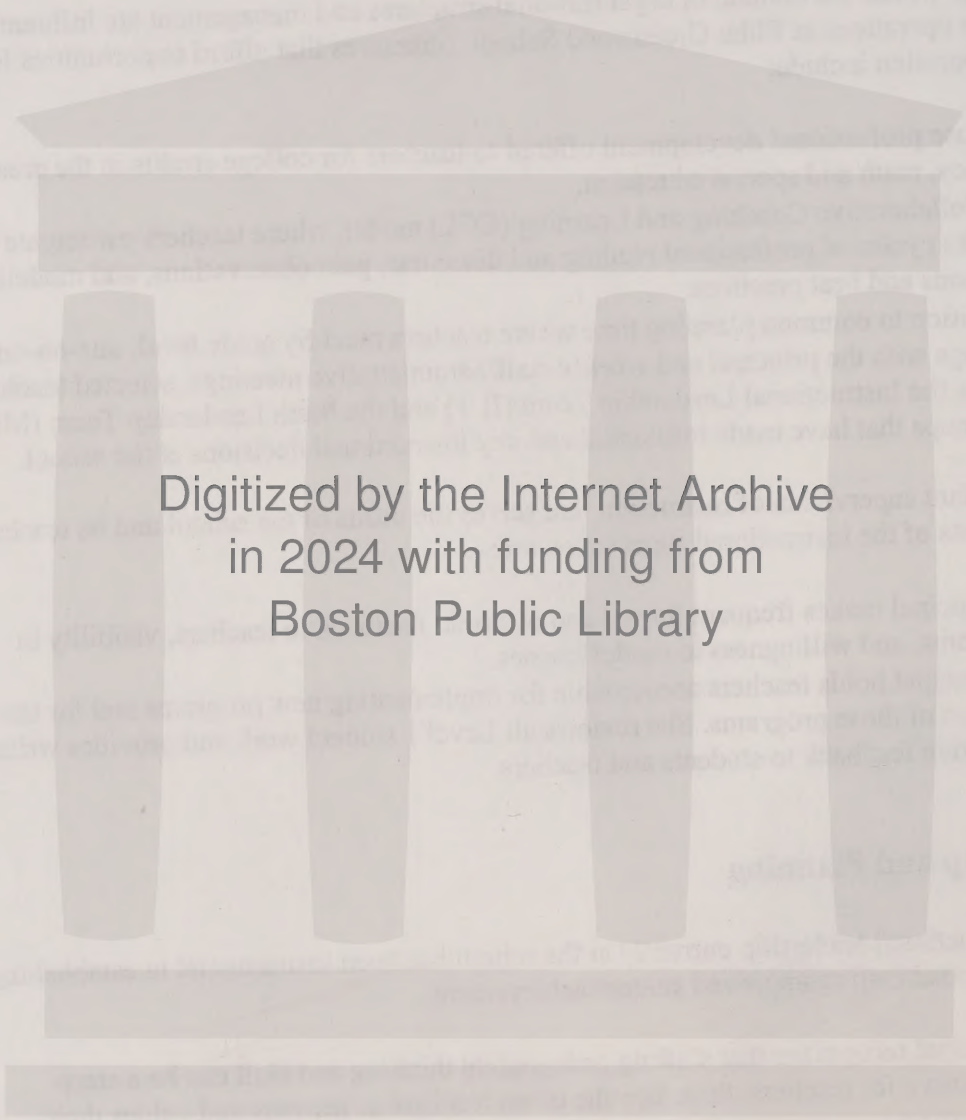
There is abundant supervision of instruction that serves the needs of the school and its teachers. Key components of the instructional supervision are:

- The principal makes frequent formal and informal feedback to teachers, visibility in classrooms, and willingness to model lessons.
- The principal holds teachers accountable for implementing new programs and for the outcomes of those programs. She reviews all Level 1 student work and provides written substantive feedback to students and teachers.

IV Leadership and Planning

The strong instructional leadership currently at the school has been instrumental in establishing a clear vision and road map to improved student achievement.

- The principal recognizes that shifting pedagogical thinking and skill can be a steep learning curve for teachers; therefore she treats teachers as learners and values their learning process.
- The sense of urgency is shifting from an emphasis on implementing new district programs to how to use these programs to improve student learning.



Fact-Finding Review Process

The Fact-Finding Review is the third stage in the process used to assess school performance under the Massachusetts School and District Accountability System. At the first stage of the process, a school's performance and improvement on state MCAS tests is rated. Schools that perform in the lowest School Performance Rating categories (very high percentage of students with failing MCAS performance; low percentage proficient and advanced) may be referred for a Panel Review.

The Panel Review process constitutes the second stage of the School and District Accountability System. Panel Reviews are conducted to assist the Commissioner of Education in determining whether state intervention is needed to guide improvement efforts in schools where student's MCAS performance is critically low and no trend toward improved student performance is evident from MCAS data. Panels, consisting of 3-5 members, review data and written information on the school's performance and improvement efforts and spend two days visiting the school and meeting with school and district leaders.

The Review Panel's charge is to advise the Commissioner of Education, at the conclusion of the review process, of its judgment on two questions:

- Does the school under review have a sound plan for improving student performance?
- Are the conditions in place for the successful implementation of the school's improvement plan?

If the answer to either or both of these questions is no, the Commissioner may declare the school to be under-performing.

Schools that are declared to be under-performing enter the third stage in the School and District Accountability System and undergo an in-depth diagnostic Fact-Finding Review.

The purposes of the Fact-Finding Review are to:

- Provide an in-depth diagnosis of the school's strengths and areas for improvement, including specific causal analysis.
- Use extensive observation (school and classroom) to build a knowledge base for the school's planning work.
- Make specific recommendations for the development of the school's improvement plan

The Fact-Finding Team's charge is to advise the Commissioner and Board of Education, at the conclusion of the review process, of its judgment on two key questions:

1. What are the reasons for the low levels of student performance in ELA and mathematics at this school?
2. What are the prospects for improved student performance at this school?

The Fact-Finding Team answers the key questions based on evidence collected through observations of teaching and learning, interviews of faculty, students, administrators, district personnel and other school stakeholders and through the review of documents, including the school improvement plan, student assessment information, curriculum documents, and student work. The team's judgments must be robust and fully supported by evidence.

The Fact-Finding Team's judgments are guided by a protocol which requires the team to respond to the key questions in each of the following domains: curriculum and instruction; school climate; organizational structures and management; leadership and planning. The Fact-Finding Team uses its professional judgment to focus on domains that reveal key strengths and areas for improvement in the school.

Elihu Greenwood Elementary School Profile

Enrollment

The Elihu Greenwood School is one of 83 elementary schools in Boston. The school serves students in kindergarten through grade 5. Preliminary tabulations show 429 students enrolled at the school as of October 1 of this academic year. Between 2001 and 2003, enrollment fluctuated between 415 and 480 students. Over 70 percent of the student body in the last four years have been Black. Hispanics comprised nearly 20 percent; Whites between five and nine percent.

Over the last four years, the majority of students at the Greenwood School (between 79 and 89 percent) have been from low-income families. The school has a School-Wide Title I program and reported that 20 percent of students receive Special Education services. The percentage of students who speak a first language other than English has fluctuated between 14 and 24 percent; one to eight percent of students have been Limited English Proficient (LEP).

Attendance rates at this school have fluctuated since 2001. The attendance rate in 2003 was 94.7; the average number of days students were absent was 8.1. In 2003, the school reported a retention rate of 7 percent and an out-of-school suspension rate of 6.5, an increase from 0.2 percent in 2002.

Staffing

This year, the Greenwood School reported having a staff of 41 that includes one administrator, five specialists, five teacher aides, one curriculum facilitator, and 30 teachers. Thirty-four percent of the staff has been at the school for fewer than five years. The school reported that all of its full-time teachers, except one, were certified to teach in their current positions.

MCAS Overview

Students at the Greenwood School are assessed in English language arts (ELA) in grades 3 and 4, and in mathematics in grade 4. In 2003, the school was found to make Adequate Yearly

Progress (AYP) in ELA in the aggregate and for all its subgroups except for Hispanics.[1] This year was the only time in the last five MCAS administrations that the school made AYP in ELA. In mathematics, the school failed to make AYP in the aggregate and for all its subgroups in 2003. In the last five years, the school has not made AYP in mathematics.

Student Performance in English Language Arts

GRADE 3

Regular Education

The performance of grade 3 students in ELA has shown improvement over the last three years. In 2001, 46 percent of students were proficient, 45 performed at the Needs Improvement level, and eight percent at Warning. The following year, 51 percent of students performed at the Proficient level, 42 % scored at Needs Improvement, and 8 percent were at Warning. In 2003, the percentage of proficient students rose to 59 percent, 36 percent of students scored at Needs Improvement, and five percent were at the Warning level.

Special Education

The performance of special education students also experienced sustained improvement over the last three years. In 2001, six percent of special education students performed in the Needs Improvement level, and 94 percent in Warning. In 2002, the percentage in need of improvement rose to 12, while those at warning declined to 88 percent. In 2003, 13 percent of special education students in grade 3 were proficient, 13 percent performed at Needs Improvement, and 73 percent scored in Warning.

Limited English Proficient

Fewer than 10 LEP students have enrolled in grade 3 ELA.

GRADE 4

Regular Education

The distribution of regular education students' scores in grade 4 ELA has varied over the last four years and shows no discernible trend of sustained improvement. In 2000, 66 percent of students performed at the Needs Improvement level and 34 percent scored at Warning. The following year, 20 percent were found proficient; 62 percent in need of improvement; and 18

[1] In accordance with the federal No Child Left Behind Act passed in 2001, student performance is disaggregated by the following subgroups: Limited English Proficient, Special Education, Free/Reduced Lunch, African-American/Black, Asian or Pacific Islander, Hispanic, Native American, and White. A minimum of 20 students per subgroup is required to issue a statistically sound rating or determination of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). The subgroups meeting the minimum sample size at the Greenwood School in 2003 were Free/Reduced Lunch, Special Education, African-American/Black, and Hispanic in ELA. In mathematics, Free/Reduced Lunch, Special Education, and African-American/Black.

percent in Warning. In 2002, the percentage of proficient students fell to eight percent; 68 percent scored at the Needs Improvement level, and 24 percent at Warning. In 2003, 13 percent of students assessed performed at the Proficient level. Fifty three percent of scores were in the Needs Improvement category, and the remaining 34 percent in Warning.

Special Education

Over three-quarters of special education students continue to perform at the Warning level and very few or none have reached proficiency in the last four years. In 2000, 20 percent of students performed at the Needs Improvement level, and the remaining 80 were at Warning. In 2001, 23 percent were in need of improvement and 77 in Warning. The next year, the proportion of those in need of improvement fell to 14 while those in Warning rose to 86 percent. In 2003, three percent reached proficiency, 21 percent performed in the needs Improvement category, and 76 percent in Warning.

Limited English Proficient

Fewer than 10 LEP students have enrolled in grade 4 ELA.

Student Performance in Mathematics

GRADE 4

Regular Education

Except for 2001 when the school saw some marginal improvement, the performance of regular education students in mathematics has been static over the last four years. In 2000, five percent of students were proficient in mathematics. Thirty-five percent performed at the Needs Improvement level, and 59 percent at Warning. In 2001, the percentage of proficient students rose by three percentage points; 55 percent were in need of improvement, and 36 percent in Warning. Student performance in 2002 and 2003 mirrored that of 2000.

Special Education

The performance of grade 4 special education students for the last four years shows no pattern of sustained improvement. In 2000, nine percent of students performed at the Needs Improvement level and the remaining 91 percent in Warning. In 2001, nine percent of students reached proficiency, 23 percent were in need of improvement, and 68 percent scored at the Warning level. The following year, the percentage of those proficient fell to five percent, 23 percent performed at Needs Improvement, and 73 percent at Warning. In 2003, there were no proficient students. Thirty-four percent were in need of improvement, and 66 percent performed at Warning.

Limited English Proficient

Fewer than 10 LEP students have enrolled in grade 4 mathematics.

Key Domains of Inquiry

I: Curriculum and Instruction

The Fact-Finding Team reviewed the school's Whole School Improvement Plan (WSIP), conducted 27 classroom observations and interviewed administrators, district leaders, coaches and teachers, including specialists and long-term substitutes. The Team identified two key areas that defined the school's progress toward student improvement: school-wide buy-in and implementation of the curriculum was noted as a strength and the quality of instructional methods and practices a weakness.

Implementation of curriculum:
In the past three years the school has had to adopt three new curricula mandated by the district, requiring a shift in teachers' pedagogy, philosophy, skill and practice. In 2000-2001 the school's focus was Guided Reading and Writers Workshop. As the staff fine-tuned its skills implementing these two programs they were asked to add Readers Workshop and TERC Investigations. By year three, (2002-2003) the district added a component of Readers'/Writers' Workshop—conferencing—which requires teachers to maintain records of every student's progress in reading, writing and math. From the Fact Finding Team's review of' student conference logs teachers' appear to be meeting with students at least once a week in both ELA and math. This year (2003-2004) the staff is in its second year of school-wide implementation of Readers'/Writers' Workshop, Conferencing and TERC investigations. Further, the school is also implementing three priorities identified in their WSIP (Reading Comprehension, Vocabulary Development and Mathematical thinking) as well as Responsive Classroom.

The Principal has supported and required teachers to implement district programs. As a result the structural elements of implementing district programs are in place. During classroom observations, review of student work and interviews with teachers, there was consistent evidence of mini-lessons, 10 minute math, AYP math (a recently added district mandated 30 minute basic skills component designed to parallel MCAS type material and address the curriculum coverage gaps in *Investigations*) conferencing, use of rubrics, reading, writing and math notebooks/journals, guided reading instruction, TERC *Investigations*, workshop model, math folders. To support teachers in launching these programs the principal has offered and led in-house professional development and encouraged teachers to attend district sponsored professional development. The principal maximizes the use of district literacy and math coaches by creating a schedule with coaches in advance of their visit, optimizing their limited time at Greenwood, allowing them to focus on working directly with teachers. Coaches praised the principal, reporting that not only was the schedule effectively established but that teachers were well prepared, did follow-up during cluster meetings, observations or modeling lessons.

The clear emphasis on implementing Readers'/Writers' Workshop and TERC *Investigations* was evident in 27 classroom visits. The structure and philosophy of these programs supports the instructional priorities the school has identified in its WSIP. TERC *Investigations* focuses on prompting students to explain their mathematical thinking, a cornerstone math priority identified in the school's WSIP. Readers' Workshop highlights increasing reading stamina as well as comprehension. The two ELA priorities identified by the school are to increase comprehension skills by using essential facts and ideas for interpretive purposes and building a stronger vocabulary base to derive meaning from text. The practitioner panelists observed all three priorities to be clearly embedded in district-mandated programs during their two days at the school.

In addition teachers are expected to supplement district programs by creating literacy and vocabulary units. The panel reviewed these units and found them to be comprehensive in meeting the student weaknesses as identified by the school. The teacher- created units included: retelling, writing prompts, fluency, character development, topic development, comprehension strategies, all aligned with WSIP priorities. The vocabulary units outlined strategies on how to enhance vocabulary through word study. Teachers received professional development both from coaches and the principal on these topics.

The focus of previous WSIPs was largely procedural and did not thoroughly cover data analysis of student performance in great detail. The current WSIP offers less analysis than the Team actually discovered was being done at Greenwood. Disaggregated analysis of the most recent SAT 9, MCAS and district formative assessments were conducted by the principal and exist in binders reviewed by the Fact Finding Team. However, the Team was unsure of how aware teachers are of this more extensive analysis. The Math Leadership Team (MLT) is doing a current review and analysis of district mid-year assessments. Although individual teachers generate data from Looking at Student Work (LASW), conferencing, teacher created assessments, end of unit test, formative/summative and standardized assessments, the Team felt this is an area that needs to be strengthened and institutionalized at the grade and school levels. While it may exist in some form at grade level teams, an organized analysis should be generated in writing, summarizing multiple assessment measures, with an emphasis on student work and the instructional priorities and strategies identified targeted to student needs.

Team members reviewed feedback given to the school from district leadership. Feedback to the principal was generally verbal. The principal summarized this feedback extensively, furnishing teachers with a thorough sense of the district remarks and the principal's proposals/directives to full staff and individual classroom teachers designed to address district concerns. A review of the principal's analysis of observations by the Deputy Superintendent focused on whether or not structural elements of programs were in place (reading, writing and math notebooks, student work posted) but also questions about curriculum coverage and instructional practice.

The current principal is leaving at the end of this school year, as is the Deputy Superintendent. As the district considers new leadership both at the school and district levels, the support the school receives from district will be critical in moving the school forward. Strong, positive, supportive relationships between the school and district personnel will be critical to the school's progress. The students and staff at the Elihu Greenwood School will be best served with minimal

confusion about WSIP approval, available funds, and the nature of staff feedback. As the school moves through the PIM process with an enhanced level of staff participation, it is critical for the district's evaluation of the school's curriculum and instruction work to be clear, in writing, with guidelines for approval and revision.

Greenwood is slotted to become a "Reading First" school. The Fact-Finding Team would recommend a close review of this decision and allow the school and its new leadership to make that determination based on their current needs. To add a new curriculum component raises questions of how it will merge with Readers'/Writers' Workshop. According to some personnel, the Reading First materials and methods do not align well with the needs identified by the school. The school has the programs structure in place and is moving toward deepening the content of these programs. Although the district conferred with the principal about accepting this program, it should carefully weigh the time needed to develop competence in presenting a new program. During interviews, the fourth grade teachers reported that improved writing skills the students are demonstrating are a direct result of third grade teachers' focus on Writers' Workshop. Similarly, fifth grade teachers said that an increasing number of students tested in reading are entering their classes with grade level reading skills (more than in previous years), and attributed the success to the fourth grade teams focus on Readers' Workshop. In addition to teachers testimonials, the Fact Finding Team felt that one of the strengths at the school is the clear emphasis and consistent implementation of Readers'/Writers' Workshop.

Quality of instructional methods and practices:
Although the program structures are in place there is variability in the quality of instructional methods and practices. In math, teachers articulated difficulty adhering to math pacing guides, a limited knowledge of pedagogy attached to new programs and a lack of depth in their own understanding of some aspects of math.

The Principal's vision with respect to curriculum/programs is "for her staff to have a more comprehensive appreciation for content and pedagogical skills to deliver it." To help accomplish a deeper knowledge of math and literacy she provides training and resources (buys books—out of pocket expense—for her staff's professional libraries) to elevate teacher expectations in instruction. Teachers indicated in interviews that the training workshops and professional reading is making a difference in the expansion of their skill base. Key stakeholders (teachers, coaches and principal) understand that introducing critical thinking skills, higher order skills, and achieving depth with content are the next key elements that will enhance the rigor of the programs.

The Fact-Finding Team witnessed instructional methods and practices that must be highlighted as examples to be replicated. Positive practices included teachers' maximizing student engagement, emphasis on vocabulary building, strong routines and outstanding classroom management, in part a reflection of "Responsive Classroom" routines. Generally, group work seemed effective, transitions promoted time on task, and great classroom environment and resources. In many classrooms there was a noticeable theme of asking students to explain their thinking, probing questions, and pushing for extended thinking. However, as mentioned earlier, not all teachers were engaging students using these techniques.

Key weaknesses observed during practitioners' classroom observations were: variability of rigor, a range of degrees of teachers moving instruction to a higher level even when students were primed to do so. There was some evidence of teachers getting stalled on a lesson element and failing to move the lesson along. On-going assessment of student performance as the lesson evolved was inconsistent. In some cases, lesson objectives were not stated or clear to students. In general, basic and effective instructional methods and techniques are in place but the nature and quality of instruction is uneven.

The Principal and coaches cite reasons for the inconsistency of instructional effectiveness by noting that many staff had difficulty making the pedagogical shift from teacher dominated (centered) instruction to serving as facilitators of constructivist activity enhancing student skills at becoming more self-reliant learners. The expectation that curriculum and pedagogy will change simultaneously has been a challenge at the school. The staff has struggled to coordinate instructional content and practice so that everyone can identify a common vision. Workshop models and Investigations require time to be used more flexibly with multiple instructional strategies. Classroom evidence suggests some teachers have made the shift more easily than others.

Implementing peer observation as part of the district supported Collaborative Coaching and Learning (CCL) model has been problematic due to contractual issues and some professional reluctance to share practice. This model could serve as an important extension of discussions of best practice at grade level/common planning time meetings and provide replication and modeling of the many examples of instructional excellence noted by Fact-Finding Team.

There has been slow and relatively recent identification of staff instructional needs in teaching specific comprehension strategies that encourage students to go beyond literal text interpretations to extract deeper meaning and generate inferences. The same applies to teachers' understanding of the critical nature of exposure to rich vocabulary and structured word study. In addition to the math curriculum pacing issues, teachers, the principal district leaders and the coach math appear to understand that teachers need "to get the mathematical ideas within particular units" and be more certain about the questions that need to be posed to children to accelerate what students learn and how they learn it. In all subjects, the level of challenging, higher order thinking skills, routinely rigorous work and the practice of inquiry does not characterize instruction on a uniform basis. During the range of interviews, the coaches, principal and district leaders seem to agree that the organizational structure and teachers' sense of urgency about the need for change exists but professional development now has to move teachers to the realm of: 1) How do we go deeper and maximize the ideas we have developed? 2) How do we use vocabulary enhancement to enrich students' scope of information? 3) How can we help students to understand what they need? 4) How do we help teachers define what is worth spending time on without worrying about "coverage" 5) How do we ensure students are learning something important well before moving on? 6) How does the school determine what the instructional priorities are?

Lastly, there appears to be a disconnect between math results and the establishment of priorities. As noted earlier, the principal has reviewed more data than has been internalized by the full staff. In math, there appears to be incomplete data analysis and lack of reflective time/process. This is seemingly affirmed by the principal's evaluation of 2003 MCAS results showing weaknesses in

measurement, algebra, number sense, open response, and patterns/relations—none of which appeared as priorities in the recent WSIP. While the school's goal of improving students' ability to communicate mathematical thinking is a worthy one and essentially correlates to the full range of standards that produces low student results on the MCAS, it did not link this identified math goal with each of the math strands identified by data analysis as student weaknesses Identifying grade level instructional priorities will help the staff as it seeks to promote best practice and increase instructional rigor.

Some actions the school can take and strengths it can build on are using common planning time and various professional development forums to elevate the nature of professional discourse to an accelerated learning level for teachers and students. It seems important to understand that higher level questions are not necessarily more difficult than lower level questions and that the Workshop models rely heavily on the principles of differentiated learning. Coaches talked about framing excellent questions geared to achieving lesson objectives and promoting the kind of discussion, analysis and applications designed to increase learning proficiencies.

Teachers credited the Principal with providing exceptional professional development in math. The district uses her to provide math training for other principals. The value of principal driven math professional development vs. district-based offering is uncertain and undocumented. The district leaders informed the team that the participation of E. Greenwood staff in district math initiatives has been very low. Given the uniformly acknowledged teacher needs in math content and pedagogy, there might be value to the argument that staff needs something more in the training realm. This position was affirmed by the math coach, who believes that Greenwood teachers would benefit from additional professional development beyond school based initiatives.

During the Fact-Finding Team's debriefing sessions with district and school leaders, teachers articulated a strong sense of respect for and confidence in the work of the current coaches. The Team felt that with a new principal assignment next fall, continuity of coaching support is crucial to move the school to a level that should produce improved student performance.

Additionally, the district requires schools with low math MCAS scores to teach an additional 30 minutes of math using district created Average Yearly Progress (AYP) packets, which contain math material covered on the MCAS aimed at increasing student familiarity with MCAS like questions and problems. The problem is that these AYP packets arrive at the school last minute and reportedly require hours of duplication by teachers, who are left with little time to prepare proper instruction. Timely distribution of AYP packets by the district math department would alleviate the problem and allow teachers the time to plan and prepare coverage of this material.

II: School Climate

The Fact-Finding Core Team spent three full days at the school and panelists two. During this time team members were able to observe numerous aspects of the schools culture and climate. Within this domain of school climate the team was able to identify strengths the school could build on in their continuous effort to improve student performance. The E. Greenwood staff

shares a commitment and vision to improve student performance. Further, staff understands their role in the implementation of identified priorities. This vision and commitment is evident through staff collaboration and a family atmosphere evident at the school. In addition, the interactions between students and teachers, administration and staff were respectful and conducive to learning.

Collaboration among staff:
The uniformity in written documents, class observations and interviews speaks to the school wide understanding of the WSIP priorities. Everyone supports the vision as expressed in the WSIP. The specialist teachers' interviews exemplify this collaboration. The music teacher incorporates units of study that support classroom instruction; students are learning songs about the 50 states and the United States Constitution. The science specialist is incorporating non-fiction material in her class to support second grade units on that genre. Two long-term substitute teachers were informed of the WSIP priorities by the principal and she worked with them in ways to support those initiatives. These teachers currently support and reinforce literacy strategies through read- alouds that are linked to comprehension goals.

A collegial atmosphere permeates the building. Teachers often cited the support they receive from colleagues as the motivation required to implement new programs, address their steep learning curve, and little validation from district that they are on the right track in spite of their hard work. One of the kindergarten teachers assembled a library of supplementary materials for *Investigations* for all staff and teachers who have been trained in specific techniques or processes (math facilitators) provide internal professional development. The Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) and Math Leadership Team (MLT) are well represented across grade levels and special needs teachers meet and plan routinely with regular education staff.

Teachers' schedules allow for common planning time to meet by grade level teams. A review of agendas from these meetings demonstrates use of teachers' time to improve teaching. A typical agenda for a grade level meeting includes looking at student work (LASW) sessions. These sessions have produced a comprehensive list of strategies teachers rely on to address common student weaknesses in ELA and math. Teachers have also taken advantage of this time to create Literacy Units and Vocabulary Units to support their WSIP priorities. Teachers' investment in creating supplementary materials to improve their implementation of new programs has resulted in school wide buy in of vision and implementation strategies of the WSIP priorities. Even though it is not done consistently throughout the school, select groups of teachers by grade level are visiting each other's classrooms and observing peers implementation of identified strategies resulting from LASW sessions. Rich discussions resulting from these classroom visits were documented and mentioned during teacher interviews. Teachers indicated that they hold cross grade articulation meetings at the end of the year with teachers of the next grade up to discuss the students leaving their classes. Beyond the weekly common planning time sessions, grade level teachers meet on a weekly basis either with the principal or coach to review units of study, instructional strategy or to define the work that will be done with the coach.

Within a number of contexts, special needs staff mainstreams students designated for highly restrictive settings into regular education environments. This is made possible by a close collaboration of both regular education and special education teachers working to provide the

best possible learning climate for students. Students designated for the SAR class (low cognitive skills) prototype participate in a learning disabilities classroom where teachers report positive progress, with students functioning at a higher level than the prototype would suggest. All special needs students are participating in district programs (Readers'/Writers' Workshop and TERC *Investigations)* with support and accommodations.

The Fact-Finding Team was concerned that new leadership might impact the strong collaboration displayed during the Fact-Finding visit. However after interviewing every staff member and interacting with them in varied settings (hallways, classrooms, teachers lounge, etc.) the team concluded that this staff should be able to maintain its collegial and cohesive working relationship under a new leader. In interviews with district leaders, the coaches and principal and in a review of the principal's memos to staff, the team notes that there is a uniformity of feeling that although the framework for collaboration described here is working well, it is also acknowledged that there is a need to heighten the understanding of what it means to coordinate instructional content and establish a commonality of practice, as well as engage in more inquiry-based and in depth instructional work.

Interactions:
Positive interactions at every level were in evidence. The staff respects the principals' instructional leadership, broad-based knowledge, and professional development contributions. They praised her visibility and the valuable feedback she provides about their work. Students are respectful of teachers and peers. The school is in its second year of implementing the "Responsive Classroom" which advances a safe environment and encourages students to express their knowledge, feeling and ideas in positive ways.

In class observations students were attentive, responsive and listened to peers' ideas. They felt comfortable asking questions of classmates and teachers, and seeking clarifications and offering alternatives themselves. Students are empowered to take ownership of their learning and are rewarded for independent thinking. They are given numerous daily opportunities to explain their thinking and to demonstrate it in writing. Group work allows students to not only explore ideas with the teacher but with their peers, always with an emphasis on respecting each other's ideas and thinking.

The principal has made it her priority to know every single student in her school. Interviews with the two counselors who service students on a part time basis at the school, parents, students, teachers, and coaches describe how the principal is aware of the strengths and needs of all students. Her people skills also extend to knowing teachers needs and personal struggles. Every teacher she passed in the hallway was greeted and a conversation would bring out a small detail that demonstrated her personal knowledge of that teacher's life. Teachers trust her with information and she in turn respects that trust.

III Organizational Structures and Management

In the domain of Organizational Structures and Management, the Fact-Finding Team identified three factors that appear to be strong influences on student achievement: 1) delivery and support

of professional development; 2) time for teacher collaboration and planning for improved student achievement; and 3) supervision of instruction. The professional development, time to collaborate and supervision staff receive play a key role in helping teachers improve their instruction.

Professional Development:
The principal has strong curriculum background. Prior to this principalship she taught university students in the areas of literacy, math and special needs. When she saw a need to support her teachers as they implemented the components of guided reading, vocabulary development, math *Investigations*, and differentiated instruction, she started offering graduate courses through Fitchberg State College to her staff. The principal offered her staff in house professional development in the area of literacy before the district offered professional development to support implementation of balanced literacy components such as guided reading. Her expertise with math is sought out by the district. She has conducted professional development for district teachers and recently was asked to conduct professional development for principals.

Fact-Finding Team members reviewed professional development binders with class agendas and materials and found them to be on target with what teachers are expected to do in the classroom. In addition, teachers interviewed overwhelmingly felt that the courses have given them an understanding of key concepts needed to implement district programs. Teachers reported that the in house professional development helps them make the connections with identified school weaknesses. They cited vocabulary as an example. The principal's training helps teachers identify key math concepts and use strategies connecting math vocabulary development to TERC *Investigations*. Many teachers attend some of the district led professional development and find them complementary to the training they receive from the principal. Few teachers prefer attending in house professional development exclusively and refer to the knowledge of their colleagues and the help they provided as invaluable, and contain supports not always available from district professional development.

The main benefits of the coaches' work at the school are the Collaborative Coaching and Learning (CCL) cycles they lead. Each cycle last 6-8 weeks. Teachers identify a topic they want to improve, they read books and professional articles, and develop a proposed strategy to improve instruction in that area. The coach models lessons while some teachers visit colleagues to observe a demonstration lesson. Professional discourse continues around the topic. The coaches' time is used so efficiently that to date the literacy coach has conducted seven CCL cycles. The math coach recently started math cycles and is currently finishing up her second CCL cycle with the math teachers. The topics of the literacy CCL cycles are grade specific based on an analysis of needs for that grade level. For example, first grade teachers are working on retelling, second grade on vocabulary development through read alouds, third grade on poetry, fourth grade on reading strategies that will help students with open response questions, and fifth grade on conferencing. The positive working relationship the principal has created with the coaches and the structures she's put in place to maximize their work has resulted in a collaborative culture of learning for teachers at Greenwood.

To deepen conversations that lead to improvement in student learning, the Fact-Finding Team believes this CCL model is a strength to build on. The Principal, coaches and district leadership

all believe that the school has not drilled down to the "understanding level" in providing feedback aimed at the core of student learning. In one of the Principal's memos to staff she notes that "we haven't taken full advantage of the deep conversations before and after a modeled lesson about the content/concepts being taught and students thinking about that content and concepts." She acknowledges that it is through professional discourse that improvement in teacher instructional practice most directly related to student learning actually happens and that the E. Greenwood staff has not reached that point. Both the literacy and the math coaches said that the teachers at E. Greenwood have been judged on implementation of the structural components of mandated programs and on a superficial level, yet recognize that conversations are now moving towards how these programs can impact and improve student learning. The overwhelming feeling is that the district does not allow schools enough time to do something well before transitioning to yet another initiative; that they are actually asking adult learners to learn and adjust to a lot of things in rapid time, and that principals are correspondingly asked to bring teachers along at an unrealistic timeframe.

Teacher collaboration and planning for improved student achievement:
Several structures are in place that facilitates collaboration and planning among teachers. The school has an Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) that meets bi-weekly. This group is representative of all grade levels and includes Special Needs teachers. The ILT was slow to realize its full authority and potential as a change agent at the school. It appears from reading the Leadership report and from school and district interviews that the principal did not fully understand the ILTs purpose and model until recently. The ILT is now engaged in making major decisions for the school, for example, how to tailor the "Responsive Classroom" model to the elementary level. The ILT realized that routines, classroom management, and gradual release of responsibility (from teacher to student) were instrumental to implementing district programs that required a move from teacher centered instruction toward teacher facilitated instruction. Responsive Classroom routines have been re-enforced throughout the school as evidenced by students taking responsibility for their learning in group work, during classroom discussions, or while working independently.

The math leadership team (MLT) is lead by the math coach, and includes math teachers for each grade level (including Special Needs), has two math facilitators and meets weekly to discuss common issues teachers face with TERC *Investigations*. This team was instrumental in requesting and securing additional grade level common planning time solely focused on math. Teachers are working on planning instruction, identifying key math concepts and determining how to tie these math concepts to prior and future material. They look at upcoming math content to be covered, discuss how the content will be taught to ensure success with the unit—all of this documented through math meeting agenda notes. They focus on analyzing city-wide assessments, unit evaluations, AYP math concepts, 10 minute math, LASW, in order to identify weaknesses and develop professional development to address them. This group is empowered to improve math instruction at the school. They realize how much support teachers need with TERC based on their own initial struggles implementing the program.

Additional structures in place to help teachers collaborate and plan for instruction are weekly administrative and one-on-one meetings with the principal, as well as grade level meetings. Grade level meeting agendas show how this time is used as work sessions focused on discussing

or creating units that support teachers' implementation of programs. The Principal has created a schedule that allows for uninterrupted literacy and math instruction/blocks as well as increased math instruction from 60 to 90 minutes a day. The additional math instruction time is used for the special AYP units and for "10 minute math." The Principal has adroitly developed a core group of regular substitutes who help to support the structures for teacher collaboration and planning.

Supervision of instruction:
Teachers receive regular formal and informal feedback from the principal. There is a major discrepancy noted between the district's perception of the quality of feedback provided by the Principal to the teachers and what the Fact-Finding Team heard from staff and coaches. The district believes the Principal's feedback should continue to compliment teachers' progress but add explicit expectations for improvement. However, the Team read a dozen summative evaluations the Principal wrote which contained many examples of corrective suggestions. Teachers conveyed a sense of the Principal advancing their practice through the valuable feedback she offers. The Principal not only evaluates and gives teachers feedback, but she also evaluates student's work. In the WSIP the Principal sets a monitoring goal for herself of reviewing Level 1 students' notebooks (reading, writing and math) twice a year. The Team asked for evidence that this monitoring had taken place. Teacher after teacher submitted multiple samples of student journals and notebooks containing written feedback from the Principal. In addition, the Principal also provided the team with several two page summaries of her comments to teachers' regarding her review of their student's work. The feedback is organized around a rubric created by the principal for reviewing: writer's notebook, reader's notebook, reading and writing conferences, math journals, math folders, math conference notes, word walls, and other environmental/WSIP observations. The Principal is not only interested in teachers' instruction but ultimately the "outcome" of that instruction—student learning—and based on reviews of feedback clearly holds teachers accountable for both.

In the Principal's leadership report, she mentions a need to heighten teacher accountability in several places. If the district believes that teacher accountability at E. Greenwood needs to be more rigorous, the new leadership (district and school) have an ideal opportunity to establish in the PIM the sort of ongoing monitoring procedures required to address the performance of administration, teachers and students throughout the year. The current WSIP offers a sound starting framework for expectations and products of supervision and evaluation to be clarified or expanded on.

From its review of a variety of documents and conversations with relevant personnel, the Fact-Finding Team concluded that the Principal's feedback has had to focus at times on building staff morale due to the negative impact of district feedback on the Greenwood faculty.

IV Leadership and Planning

In exploring the factors related to Domain 4: Leadership and Planning, the Fact-Finding Team identified one key area of strength—strong instructional leadership in the school. Coaches and teachers expressed that the Principal "treats her staff as learners and values what is required to

learn." The culture of learning is evident in classroom visits, teacher collaboration, CCL cycles, professional discourse, data review, and analysis and accountability for outcomes.

The elements that contribute to the Principal's strong instructional leadership have been covered in earlier sections of this report. They include: creating a clear vision for student improvement that is supported by documents reviewed, interviews and classroom observations; structuring the school day to allow for staff collaboration through grade level meetings, ILT and MLT meetings as well as effective use of coach's time to maximize implementation of new programs; reviews of students work; conducting data analysis used to identify student weaknesses; supervision of staff; informal and formal feedback; conducting in-house professional development and ensuring that everyone (including Special Needs teachers) are implementing district mandated programs.

In addition, she participates in Looking at Student Work (LASW) sessions during grade level meetings, is involved in classroom instruction and is keen on teacher needs. Teachers cite numerous examples of the Principal visiting their classroom, modeling lessons, getting involved in student group work, and overall describe her as "enjoying" teaching. Review of teacher evaluations and informal feedback as well as interviews with teachers and coaches report that the Principal can articulate and write what teachers need to do to take instruction to the next level, but appreciated the impact of the change process as one is attempting to change pedagogical thinking and teach simultaneously. Second and third grade teachers unanimously cited "time" as the essential element needed to implement the curriculum effectively and to change instructional practice, the one essential resource the school has not had in its rapid adoption of new programs year after year.

District feedback often focused on judging the structures of programs (word walls, mini-lessons, notebooks, etc.) and that has in the past created a sense of urgency around implementation. The school's focus as identified by teachers, coaches, and the Principal, is now shifting to asking teachers what they know rather than what they do. Teachers felt stripped of their ability to make sound instructional choices due to district constraints. For example during a multiplication TERC *Investigations* unit, a teacher wanted to make the connection to division, but because it was not listed in the district pacing guide she questioned her intuition and did not introduce division. Although there are numerous examples of teachers feeling constrained and limited in using their knowledge about teaching and learning, there are indications that things are changing. As teachers gain content knowledge, prioritize what is essential for students to know, and continue to work with coaches, they are beginning to feel they can be flexible with their implementation of district programs.

The literacy and math coaches who have been instrumental in helping teachers adopt district programs sense from their conversations with individual teachers, classroom observations, and CCL discussions that the urgency is shifting from implementing programs and acquiring content knowledge toward making best use of district programs to improve student learning. This is a work in progress but one acknowledged by teachers, coaches and school leadership. Continuous focus and relentless attention to how district programs can improve student learning is essential and future conversations must focus on how to make this shift.

Conclusion

Although there are many examples of strengths at E. Greenwood, they center on the current school leadership and her instructional vision and guidance. The E. Greenwood will have a new Principal school year 2004-2005 as well as new district leadership. These changes in leadership will be critical for the sustainability of identified strengths at the school and their support by the district. The new leadership will also be instrumental in prioritizing and supporting efforts to address key weaknesses in programs and practices that affect student achievement.

In curriculum and instruction, academic rigor will be enhanced if the school and district can build teachers' content knowledge and focused professional discourse around achieving depth of understanding in content areas. Coaches, ILT and MLT members need to focus on facilitating conversations that help teachers achieve a level of instructions that allows for critical thinking skills, higher order thinking and questioning that help students take ownership of their learning.

A positive school climate is a strong asset for E. Greenwood. Recognition and support of the current collaborative culture among staff will ensure continuance of such collaboration. Teachers' grade level meetings and math meetings are supported by coaches who have worked with the staff for two years. Ensuring that the coaching staff remains the same will allow teachers to continue their work amidst major leadership changes.

The school has rallied around the vision as expressed in their WSIP. As a team of teachers from the school goes through the PIM process this summer (2004), close attention should be paid to how the PIM requirements and the WSIP requirements articulate a common vision/road map for student improvement. In addition the school has enough new programs to fine tune and perfect and should refrain from adding any new ones, rather allow time to perfect the programs already in place.

The Fact Finding Team concluded that the current organizational structures promote teacher collaboration in ways that are essential to sustaining the school's improvement gains. The Collaborative Coaching and Learning (CCL) cycles have been instrumental in helping teachers struggling with huge pedagogical shifts as they implement new programs and change instructional methods from teacher centered to student centered instruction. A structure that continues to allow teachers time to meet, discuss, model and reflect on best practices can strengthen the school's capacity to help students achieve success.

The sense of urgency created by the current leadership must be sustained by new leadership. Teachers and coaches understand that they will no longer be held accountable only for the structural elements of new programs but also for how these programs improve student learning. This urgency must be at the forefront of any school improvement efforts.

The school looks forward to support and guidance from new district leadership that will accelerate school based efforts to improve student performance.

APPENDIX A:
FACT FINDING REVIEW SCHEDULE

APRIL 5, 2004 DAY 1: CORE TEAM		
	Core Team	
12:00 PM – 5:00 PM	Initial deliberations and document review	

APRIL 6, 2004 DAY 2: CORE TEAM AND PRACTITIONERS		
	Core Team	**Practitioners A B C D**
7:30 – 8:30 AM	Introductions to principal, school tour; additional focus areas for class visits	
8:30 – 9:00 AM	Set up workspace	9:30 Meet students to be shadowed
9:00 – 12:00 AM	9:30-10:30 Meet with Instructional Leadership Team-includes Data Team 10:30-11:30 Meet with Math Leadership Team	A. Shadow student #1 208 Sped.* B. Shadow student #1 205 Gr.4 C. Shadow student #1 106 Gr.5 * D. Shadow student #1 102 Gr.5 *
12:00 – 1:00	Lunch	Lunch with students; break
1:00 – 3:00 PM	Meet with Deputy Superintendent, School Support Specialist, Coaches (math)	A. Shadow student # 2 107 Gr.2 B. Shadow student # 2 002 K ** C. Shadow student # 2 201 Gr.3 ** D. Shadow student#2 103 Gr.1 **
3:00 – 5:00 PM	Debrief with practitioners - Construct responses to domains 1 (and 2)	

APRIL 7, 2004 DAY 3: CORE TEAM AND PRACTITIONERS		
	Core Team	Practitioners **A B C D**
8:00– 8:30 AM	Review schedule, assign tasks	
8:30 – 9:30 AM	Share debrief summary with principal	Review Day 2 observation notes for trends, strengths, needs. Prepare for day 3 observations
9:30 –12:00 AM	Focus Groups/ Interviews: 9:30-10:00 Specials staff 10:00-10:30 Student interview 10:30-11:00 Grade 5 staff 11:10-11:40 Grade 4 staff 11:10- 11:40 K and Gr. 1 staff 11:45-12:15 Obs. 103 Gr.1 11:45-12:15 Obs. 105 Gr.1	A .9:30-10:15 101 Gr.5 10:20-11:10 Music Gr. 5 11:10-12:00 110 Gr.5 B. 9:30-10:10 204 Gr.4 10:15-11:00 203 Gr.4 11:15-12:00 109 Science Gr.4 C. 9:30-10:10 202 Gr.3 10:15-11:00 209 Comp. Gr.5 11:10-12:00 206 Gr.3 9:30-10:10 107 Gr.2 10:15-11:00 108 Gr.2 11:10-12:00 104 Gr.1/2
12:00 – 1:00 P.M.	Lunch	Lunch
1:00 – 3:00 PM	Debrief school visits; refine/ revise responses to questions for domains 1 and 2- Practitioners depart	
3:00 – 5:00 PM	Debrief focus groups and interviews; formulate responses domains 3/4	

APRIL 8, 2004 DAY 4 CORE TEAM ONLY	
	Core Team
8:00-8:30 AM	Arrival, review schedule of remaining interviews, class visits
8:30 – 9:30 AM	Share debrief summary with principal

9:30- 12:00	Interviews and completion of summary findings for all domains 9:30-10:00 Parent focus group 10:00-10:30 Math and Literacy Coaches 10:40-11:10 Gr.2 and 3 staff
12:00 – 1:00	Lunch
1:00 – 3:00 PM	Meet with Deputy Superintendent and School Support Specialist, principal and lead teacher to report team's responses to protocol questions

* will visit other designated classrooms during this time block
** will visit other designated classrooms during this time block

APPENDIX B: Team Members
Elihu Greenwood Elementary School, Hyde Park, MA

Team Members	Title/Organization	Role
Nick Feldman	SchoolWorks	Chair
Emilys Peña	SchoolWorks	Core Team Member
Lisa Bryant	Director, Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter School	Team Member
Anthony Luizzi	Deputy Superintendent, Brockton Public Schools	Team Member
Anthony Neves	School Support Specialist, Fall River Public Schools	Team Member
James Rice	Principal, Balmer School, Northbridge Public Schools	Team Member